

# geek

Lifestyle + Tech + Gadgets

Gaming + Movies

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homecoming

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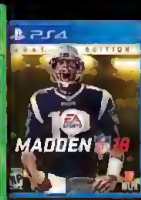
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# Welcome from the Editor

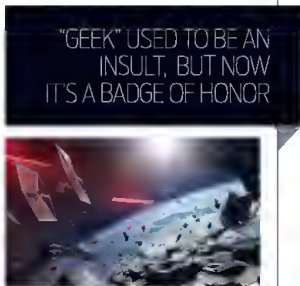
GREETINGS, GEEKS! A few decades ago that phrase might have come off as an insult, but in 1977 a weird little movie about a farm boy in outer space somehow turned everything upside down, and now just about anyone on the street can diagram the family tree of Luke Skywalker, tell you what a TIE fighter is and argue with you whether prequels are a good or bad idea. Our blockbuster movies are about galactic space armadas and superheroes, our TV shows are crawling with zombies, and we're perfectly fine with that. The geeks have truly inherited the Earth, so it's only right that they get their own magazine.

Inside this issue, you'll find in-depth reporting on the new *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and *War for the Planet of the Apes* movies; the Charlize Theron thriller *Atomic Blonde*; and Luc Besson's space opera, *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*. We'll also update you on the new Marvel TV show, *Inhumans*, as well as *Star Trek: Discovery*. And we present our list of the 20 geekiest TV shows.

In each of these features, we highlight related movies and video games (such as *Star Trek: Bridge Crew*, *Marvel's Spider-Man* and *Star Wars Battlefront II*) that you can find right here, at your local Walmart or online at Walmart.com.

We also profile the latest video streaming devices, TV box set DVD collections, and UHD 4K content. If it's geeky, you'll find it within these pages, and you'll also find it at Walmart, because right now geek is good.

  
**Jeff Bond**  
EDITOR



**geek**

PUBLISHER  
Steve B. Harris

## EDITORIAL

EDITOR  
Jeff Bond

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT  
Mark A. Altman

SENIOR EDITOR  
Edward Gross

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Marc Camron

COPY EDITOR  
Victoria A.F. Camron

LOS ANGELES BUREAU CHIEF  
Alexandra August

GEEK WEBSITE EDITOR  
Brian Kronner

CONTRIBUTORS  
Matt Cabral  
Brian Kronner  
Nikki Griffin  
Cody Stasiak

ART DIRECTION  
TI TONG

**EGM MEDIA, LLC**  
8840 Wilshire Blvd.,  
Third Floor  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
[www.egmmediagroup.com](http://www.egmmediagroup.com)

CEO  
Steve Harris

LEGAL  
Bob Wyman

ACCOUNTING  
Oz Abregoo

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR  
Jeff Eisenberg

ADVERTISING MANAGER  
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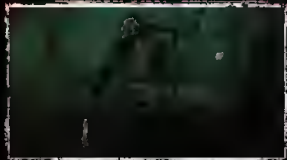
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Star Tom Holland and director Jon Watts discuss the Web-slinger's latest adventure.

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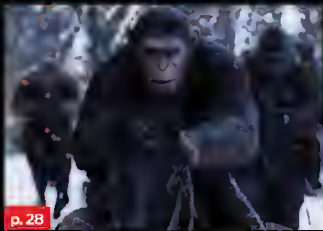
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# Streaming Trek

by Jeff Bond

AGAINST THE SUSPICIONS—AND perhaps hopes—of some fans who were beginning to insist that *Star Trek Discovery* was a hoax that would never see the light of day, footage for the new show (which will stream exclusively on the CBS All Access SVOD platform) debuted in May, showcasing stars Sonequa Martin-Green and Michelle Yeoh traversing a desert planet (shot on location in Dubai), encountering a ceremonial ship full of newly designed Klingons, and arguing about Starfleet tactics and aliens that can sense the coming of death.

There's been no new *Star Trek* to be had on television since 2005, and hardcore Trekkies (they'll demand you call them Trekkers) have fumed over the J.J. Abrams-produced "Kelvin Timeline" movies that recast Kirk, Spock, and "Bones" McCoy in a modernized,

action-oriented *Trek* universe. So the announcement of *Star Trek Discovery* has been met with both hope and trepidation by fans who rightly believe that the only way to really explore Gene Roddenberry's optimistic vision of the future is on television. But that's about all Trekkers can agree on—the *Discovery* trailer has been savaged by fans complaining that the look of the show derives too much from the lens-flared "Abrams-verse" and is too futuristic for a show supposedly set 10 years before the original Kirk and Spock's adventures. The presence of Alex Kurtzman, one of the co-writers and producers of the 2009 theatrical *Star Trek* and its followup, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, has evoked comparisons to the movie universe, despite statements from CBS that *Discovery* will take place in the original Kirk and Spock's "Prime"

timeline (Kurtzman was off shooting *The Mummy* during the

■ NEW ORBIT:  
Sonequa Martin-Green goes for a space walk in *Star Trek Discovery*.

bulk of preproduction). And the early departure of Bryan Fuller, who would have been the series' show-runner before he left to work on *American Gods* for Starz, plus a series of delays that pushed *Discovery*'s debut back from January 2017 to May and finally (we hope) to September sowed doubts about the show as well. More worrisome is the presence of *Batman & Robin* scribe Akiva Goldsman as an Executive Producer.

*Discovery* also has production talent from *Deep Space Nine* and HBO's superb *Rome* (April Nocifora), as well as writer-director Nicholas Meyer (who wrote the second episode as well as *The Wrath of Khan*—and is now reportedly leaving *Discovery* to do a *Khan* prequel

## TREK TIMELINE

HERE'S HOW THE STAR TREK TV SHOWS WORK OUT CHRONOLOGICALLY



**Enterprise**  
2001  
(CBS HOME VIDEO)  
Archer, T'Pol, and the forming of the Federation.



**Star Trek Discovery**  
2017  
(CBS ALL ACCESS)  
Spock's dad and Harry Mudd, 10 years before Kirk's Enterprise.



**The Original Series**  
1966  
(CBS HOME VIDEO)  
Kirk, Spock, Gom and fistfights.

mini-series set on Ceti Alpha V) and Roddenberry's son Rod as Executive Producer.

The cast could hardly be more prestigious. Bryan Fuller once said he'd love to cast Angela Bassett as a Starfleet captain, and Sonequa Martin-Green, who proved herself a powerful dramatic presence on AMC's *The Walking Dead*, could easily be a younger version of Bassett. The teaser trailer dropped some intriguing hints about her character, who appears to be a human raised by Vulcans. Michelle Yeoh plays Martin-Green's captain, with both serving initially on the starship *Shinzou*. And British actor Jason Isaacs, *Harry Potter*'s fiendish Lucius Malfoy, plays the

actors hail from shows like Steven Soderbergh's brilliant *The Knick* and even *The Office*, with Rainn Wilson cast as a younger Harry Mudd, the irascible con man from the 1960s *Star Trek*.

According to one source, the old 1975 Franz Josef Technical Manual, a collection of schematics of the original show's sets, uniforms, spacecraft and props, was one of the visual "bibles" for *Discovery*, along with Ralph McQuarrie's production art for the abandoned '70s *Star Trek* film *Planet of Titans*. For many fans, how *Discovery* will fit into *Trek* "canon" is critical. But what should be more important is the show's tone, writing and character development, which will



captain of the starship *Discovery*—both he and the starship go unseen in the teaser. Veteran creature prosthetics performer Doug Jones plays Lt. Saru, an alien bred to foresee death (which should come in handy), and other

have to match the heights of "peak television" — *Game of Thrones*, *Breaking Bad*, and the other sophisticated shows that have captured audiences in the past decade. That's truly a place no *Star Trek* series has gone before.

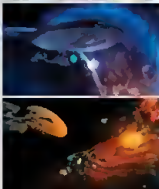


## STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW PUTS YOU ON THE ENTERPRISE

In an indication that *Star Trek*'s holodeck may be just around the corner, Ubisoft and Red Storm Entertainment are unleashing *Star Trek: Bridge Crew* on your virtual reality systems (Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and PlayStation VR specifically), allowing you and three of your friends to man the bridge of either the U.S.S. Aegis (a starship from the J.J. Abrams movies' "Kelvin Timeline") or James Kirk's classic U.S.S. Enterprise from the original TV series.

As it turns out, it's not all that easy to command a starship. Playing as either the captain (making all the important decisions), helmsman (plotting courses, steering and engaging the warp drive), tactical officer (coordinating weapons fire) or engineer (maintaining that finicky warp core), you'll first have to master the bridge's complex controls and displays.

Between the 3-D effect of your personal view of the bridge, and a second level of 3-D on the giant bridge viewscreen in front of you, you can almost get a sense of vertigo from the appearance of dangling on the edge of the galaxy as the starship maneuvers around planets and nebulae and interacts with drifting escape pods and Klingon warships. But the biggest challenge—and coolest feature—of this game may be the fact that you have to cooperate with your friends (and even others outside your living room on compatible VR systems) to get things done. After all, teamwork is what *Star Trek* is all about.



## BASICS

**DEVELOPER:**  
Red Storm  
Entertainment

**PUBLISHER:**  
Ubisoft  
PLATFORMS:  
PS4, PC

**RELEASE:**  
05.30.2017



### The Next Generation

**1987**  
(CBS HOME VIDEO)  
Picard, Data, Worf and the Borg.



### Deep Space Nine

**1993**  
(CBS HOME VIDEO)  
Sisko, Odo, and Cardassian imbroglios.



### Voyager

**1995**  
(CBS HOME VIDEO)  
Janeway, Seven of Nine and a lot of holodeck.



FOR ANYONE WHO HAS MISSED *True Blood*, NBC may provide some relief in the form of *Midnight, Texas*. Like *True Blood*, *Midnight* is based on the works of author Charlaine Harris. The supernatural-thriller series debuts on July 24.

The NBC website describes *Midnight* as sitting on the veil between the living and hell, where "nothing is what it seems. Where being normal is strange and only outsiders fit in ...." The roster of characters supports that: Manfred (François Arnaud), a psychic who communicates with spirits; Bobo (Dylan Bruce), owner of Midnight's pawn shop that is more than slightly mysterious; Fiji (Parisita Fitz-Henley), a witch who owns the local wiccan shop; Olivia (Arielle Kebbel), an assassin who has a weapon for any circumstance; Joe (Jason Lewis), an angel who knows all the secrets of the town and its people; Lemuel (Peter Mensah), a several-centuries-old vampire; Creek (Sarah Ramos), an aspiring writer who discovers there is a dark secret in her family; and Reverend Emilio Sheehan (Yul Vazquez), who seems to have a werewolf on his back as he's described as being unable to "resist the pull of the full moon."

Executive producer/showrunner Monica Breen (*Fringe*, *Revolution*, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*) explains, "The great thing about this book series is all those characters are interesting and

have different aspects to them. With Joe, there's a kind of spiritualism and sentimentality. And with Lem, there's a kind of wisdom. Fiji always means well and she's always trying, but she doesn't quite know how to handle her own emotions. So I find joy in all of them, but different versions of joy. If I'm in a bad mood, I might write one character. Instead of another, but if I'm in a hopeful mood, I'll write Fiji.

"Look, it's not as if our characters don't love each other and there's not beautiful, hot people in the camera," she continues. "But I'm hoping that you get invested in this town, because, to me, there's this sort of metaphor that's so necessary in this world right now; they're a group of people who are so different from each other, who didn't have a home anywhere else, who kind of found their tribe and they're getting along despite all their differences. And there's an investment in taking care of your neighbor. Charlaine had this really gentle heart in this book and that carries over."

As far as Breen is concerned, *Midnight, Texas* can take many roads as it moves forward. "I love these characters so much," she laughs, "and with the veil to hell sort of constantly percolating under the town, I don't necessarily see an end to the story. I also want to continue exploring these characters. The 10 episodes of the first season didn't feel like enough for me."

## THE HORROR

IF YOU'RE INTO *MIDNIGHT, TEXAS*, YOU MIGHT BE IN THE MARKET FOR THESE CREEPY OFFERINGS



### Twin Peaks: The Complete Series PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO

Overflowing with disturbing mystery, atmosphere, piping hot coffee and homemade pies, this groundbreaking David Lynch series just relaunched on Showtime, so

now's the perfect time to revisit the original.



### Fire Walk With Me VUDU STREAMING

This theatrical follow-up to the original *Twin Peaks* TV series is not for the faint of heart, but you'll need to check it out to understand what's going on in the new Showtime revival.



**Fringe**  
WARNER HOME VIDEO  
This show about FBI agents and scientists investigating strange phenomena makes a nice companion piece for *The X-Files*—without the narrative dead ends.

Nintendo

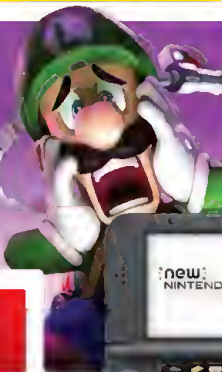
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Pokémon  
MOON



Luigi's  
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Games on 2D. Some areas also playable on 3D.

Game on 3D



by Marc Camron

## Cross the Streams

TVS ARE SMART, BUT THEY MIGHT NEED AN EXTRA BRAIN FOR MORE 4K CONTENT

TODAY'S TELEVISIONS ARE RACE CARS: fast, flashy, sleek and beautiful. And like race cars, these TVs look best with the right accessories. Instead of slick rims and a racing stripe, we adorn these flatscreen beauties with 4K content, the latest of which includes high-dynamic range (HDR) imaging. Featuring increased contrast, thanks to deeper blacks and stunning whites, as well as an expanded color range, HDR-enabled content results in visuals never before seen at home.

These technological advances sound exciting, but the trick is finding the content to take advantage of it. Ultra HD Blu-ray has gained popularity since its introduction in early 2016, and indeed it provides the best looking and sounding experience. Unfortunately, the number of releases is relatively low compared to the proliferation of 4K UHD content online (see sidebar).

The question is, then, what's the best way to get the streamed content from the internet to your fancy TV? Take a look at our favorite devices to bring the best UHD content into your living room.

## SMART TVs

Most 4K HDR TVs come with their own streaming apps. This is undoubtedly the cheapest way to stream, and some sets handle the task well. Keep in mind, though, the quality of built-in apps can vary wildly

by TV maker. There's a good chance you won't be able to receive smaller, more niche apps at all. Even if a service offers certain features, such as VUDU's excellent UHD movie selection, some devices will be slow — sometimes painfully slow — to add new features. So if you are serious about your streaming entertainment, you should check out one of these devices.

## Roku

There's a reason Roku's streaming boxes are the best-selling, most-recognized around: Consistent hardware quality and the most robust selection of "channels" has propelled it to the top. Roku's latest top-end models — the Roku Premiere + and the Roku Ultra — both feature full 4K HDR support.

About the size of a large (and thick) drink coaster, both models feature speedy quad-core processing, the latest 802.11ac dual-band wireless streaming and a well-designed remote that even has a headphone jack for private listening.

Best of all, Roku has a free smartphone app that allows you to control not only your device, but also search for specific

■ NVIDIA SHIELD: This device combines streaming and game-play capability.

content, browse available channels, and share pictures from your phone to your TV.

If you're looking for the most robust streaming player, you can't go wrong with Roku. Just be sure the model you choose has 4K HDR, and you'll be set.

## NVIDIA SHIELD

No one says a streaming player can't have other functions, too. The NVIDIA Shield (regular and Pro versions) is positioned as a robust home entertainment device. Using the popular Android operating system, the Shield provides a familiar user experience to the millions who use Android on their smart phones.

This is no smart phone, though. The Shield features an Nvidia Tegra X1 processor with a whopping 256-core GPU and 3GB RAM. This makes the Shield a formidable gaming machine too. In addition to console-quality games available through the Google Play store, you can wirelessly cast games from your PC to play on your television via the built-in 802.11ac dual-band radio.

The only device that bests the Shield in sheer number of streaming apps is the Roku. However, if you aren't concerned about the more obscure channels you will find all of the major (and many minor) ones here, including all the main providers of 4K HDR content.

Expect to pay two to three times the price of Roku, but if you're looking for a robust streaming player that handles games well, the Shield is the fastest, most complete player available.

■ ROKU ULTRA: Controllable through your smartphone, the Ultra features 4K HDR support.



(Continued on p. 34)

 PlayStation.VR



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**GREATNESS  
AWAITS**

(Continued from p. 12)

# Console Watch

GAMING GEAR  
STREAMS 4K JUST FINE



IF YOU'RE A GAMER, you might already have in your home the ideal method to stream 4K content. These two popular consoles have different strengths, however, so determine which features are most important to you.

## XBOX ONE S AND XBOX ONE X

Millions of people already own game consoles, and those owners are likely have high-speed Internet connections in place. So it's natural that these machines double as streaming players, right? Microsoft has championed this idea since the introduction of the Xbox Live service in 2002.

The Xbox One S was the first console to add 4K and HDR support (HDR is also available with certain games). The upcoming Xbox One X includes all of these features but adds the

most powerful gaming console ever made. These consoles offer fewer streaming channels than dedicated streaming players, so you will pretty much be stuck with a few main options. However, the selection is constantly expanding.

The Xbox One S and X feature two nice advantages: They recently started offering 4K HDR films for purchase, and they are the only game machines at this time to allow users to play Ultra HD Blu-rays.

If you are looking for a complete entertainment machine, with basic streaming options, the Xbox One S or X certainly warrants consideration.

■ **PLAYSTATION VS. XBOX:** Xbox One S (above) features Ultra HD Blu-ray and purchasable movie capability; PS4 Pro (below) doesn't — yet.

## PS4 Pro

Finally, the PS4 Pro offers roughly the same streaming capabilities as the Xbox One S, but without the Ultra HD Blu-ray and purchasable movies (though the latter is rumored to be coming soon). In addition to the most powerful gaming machine currently available you'll also gain the ability to stream 4K HDR content as well as to play 4K HDR games.

So if you are a proud PlayStation gamer looking to dip your toe into the 4K HDR waters, the PS4 Pro is a great place to start.



## STREAMING CENTRAL

While you have plenty of options for streaming movies and TV shows, the service that has most fully embraced everything the technology offers might not be the one you expect.

VUDU is a movie fan's dream streaming site. Not only can you rent and purchase the latest films and a deep catalog of older titles, it is at the forefront of 4K streaming. The 4K movies available on VUDU take advantage of Dolby Vision

HDR, the sharpest, most advanced version. While only compatible with the very latest equipment,

— MOVIES & TV  
**VUDU**

Dolby Vision really shines adding additional depth and detail not present in the already excellent standard HDR.

VUDU also offers Dolby Atmos sound to help achieve a true theater atmosphere. Using advanced programming, Dolby Atmos sends sound soaring over your head, enveloping you in the sound field. Again, you'll need the latest equipment and some extra speakers, but the end result is worth the effort.

If you don't own all the most modern tech, don't fret. When you purchase a 4K HDR film, it will

show at the highest resolution your screen or monitor can support: standard definition, 1080p or 4K. If you later upgrade, the same film, with the highest-quality version, will be waiting for you.

Best of all, since studios now embrace streaming, you can often buy the latest movies weeks before they are available on Blu-ray. These advantages make VUDU the platform of choice for movie buffs everywhere.



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AVALANCHE



# 20 Most Essential GEEK SHOWS On Television

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO BE A FAN OF GENRE TELEVISION THAN RIGHT NOW. The sheer volume of targeted programming has all but guaranteed something for everyone. From sci-fi to fantasy to horror, genres that used to be reserved for low-budget, off-night fare are now treated with reverence. Some subjects have become so popular, they've left the geek realm altogether (i.e., *The Walking Dead*), but there are still plenty to choose from. Odds are you'll find here at least a couple of shows that you haven't yet taken the time to explore, so let us make some suggestions. You can find just about all these shows in DVD and Blu-ray collections at your local Walmart store or at [Walmart.com](http://Walmart.com).

By Nikki Griffin and Brian Kronner



## 1. Game of Thrones

With just two seasons left, winter has come, but the cold war is just starting with Jon Snow, Daenerys, and Cersai heading for a confrontation. Who will end up on the Iron Throne?



## 2. Stranger Things

With Dungeons & Dragons, superpowers and monsters who snatch children in the dark, this show is everything that made us fall in love with geek culture. We can't wait to see Eleven again.



## 3. Rick and Morty

Dan Harmon and Justin Roiland have delivered quite possibly the best show in Adult Swim's storied history. Genius Rick Sanchez's dragging his grandchildren across dimensions, with little regard for safety or consequences, is just the family dynamic we didn't know we needed.



## 4. Ash vs Evil Dead

*AveD* is a shining example of what can happen if everything goes perfectly when an old property is revived. The writing is sharp, and Bruce Campbell is still killing it. Kudos to Starz for greenlighting this and getting out of the way.



## 5. The Defenders

The *Defenders* teams up four characters: Daredevil, Iron Fist, Luke Cage and the salty Jessica Jones. This is the big payoff for five seasons of development, so we're betting it's great.

## 6. Legion

Based on the eponymous *X-Men* character, *Legion* (David Haller) this action drama is an artsy, thinker's look at the powerful Omega-level Mutant son of Professor X — and proof that Aubrey Plaza can be terrifying.

## 7. Sherlock

*Sherlock* on BBC should be the definitive Sherlock Holmes. Cumberbatch is perfect as the cold and arrogant genius detective, and Martin Freeman's Dr. Watson is brilliant. Their chemistry and comedic timing make the 'odd couple' banter fresh.



## 8. 12 Monkeys

Syfy has had some hits, despite not being known for great production values. The quality of this show, however, is on par with networks that have bigger budgets. It features beautiful visuals and smart storytelling, as well as a terrific cast.

## 9. Dark Matter

One of the most underrated shows Syfy has ever put out, *Dark Matter* has exhibited immense heart and soul beneath its cold

space-epic exterior. What started as a memory-deficient group of strangers has grown into a family, with the show's master of snark, Marcus Boone, delivering some truly touching moments against character type.

## 10. The CW-Verse

The CW is where DC goes to get things right. *Supergirl*, *The Flash*, *Arrow* and DC's *Legends of Tomorrow* are well-written, super-fun shows that have the best and biggest crossover events television has ever seen. Online message boards are filled with fans asking for these characters to make the big screen.



## 11. Westworld

HBO's gorgeous-looking adaptation of the Michael Crichton book takes place in an Old West amusement park populated by robots who seem to be attaining human consciousness. What could go wrong? Part *Blade Runner*, part *Lost*, *Westworld* blurs the line between man and machine and makes you feel for the robots.

## 12. Mystery Science Theater 3000

Now back after a near 20-year hiatus — thanks to Netflix and Kickstarter — *MST3K*'s new cast includes comedian Jonah Ray, and geek staples Felicia Day and Patton Oswalt. A strong debut quickly squashed concerns that this version would be a shell of what came before.

## 13. The Expanse

*The Expanse* was one of Syfy Channel's new projects aimed at pulling the cable network back to

its roots, and it's really, really good. Veteran actors such as Thomas Jane and Chad L. Coleman in supporting roles lend credibility to the less-recognizable leads. The bulk of the show focuses on preventing war between Earth, Mars and the Outer Rim. It's space politics at its best.



## 14. Archer

From Pam's underground street fights to Krieger's monstrous experiments, *Archer* has done an outstanding job expanding on its supporting characters. The genre-hopping demonstrated in recent seasons has kept the show from becoming stale.

## 15. Silicon Valley

HBO's tech-industry comedy shows how casting can propel a project to great heights. While Thomas Middleditch and T.J. Miller get most of the press, the antagonistic friendship between Dinesh (Kumail Nanjiani) and Gilfoyle (Martin Starr) delivers the most comedic punch.



## 16. Star Wars Rebels

Approaching its final season, *Rebels* has established itself as an important part of the *Star Wars* canon — it's no accident that the Ghost came'd In *Rogue One*. Ezra, Hera and Sabine have earned a place in the Rebel Alliance.



## 17. Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.

From a new Ghost Rider to the Framework and the upside-down agents of Hydra, this uneven but loveable show just delivered its best season yet — even in ABC's 10 p.m. Tuesday death slot. Chloe Bennett's Daisy, and her journey from annoying hacker character to winsome superhero has kept this show consistently watchable.

## 18. Gotham

*Gotham* has overcome tone and character obstacles to be a superbly dark and campy show with complex heroes and villains. Ben McKenzie as Detective James Gordon is another DC television actor we hope makes it to the big screen.



## 19. iZombie

Based on the DC/Vertigo comic of the same name, *iZombie* is unlike anything else on TV. Perhaps best described as *Veronica Mars* meets *Quantum Leap* meets *Warm Bodies*, the show has comedy, heart and definitely brains.

## 20. The Librarians

*The Librarians* is great for families who don't want to watch animation all the time, but aren't ready for the more mature fare on HBO. It's a smart show that creates adventures around myths and history. The characters are loveable and the snappy dialogue is filled with random pop-culture Easter eggs.

# SPIDEY



ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF *CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR* — AND THERE WERE MANY — was the introduction of British actor Tom Holland in the role of Peter Parker/Spider-Man. Let's face it, the kid nailed it, priming the audience for his first (almost) solo film, *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.

Swinging Into theaters on July 7, *Homecoming* is modeled more after John Hughes than the Russos, going back to the character's comic-book roots when he was truly a high school character, balancing heroics, dating and acne. Along for the ride with Holland, Robert Downey Jr., continues his mentoring role as Tony Stark/Iron Man, while former Batman and Birdman Michael Keaton is Adrian Toomes, aka the Vulture.

# BRAD

# SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING

by Edward Gross

## HOMECOMING'S GOT HIM



# SPIDER-MAN



For this exclusive look at the film, Geek hung with Holland and director Jon Watts (*Cop Car*), who spin an intriguing inside look. And with that, the punning comes to an end.

## SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING AS HIGH SCHOOL MOVIE

**// JON WATTS //** I always just go back to the source material. That's where you just get back to the original spirit of what made *Spider-Man* such a sensation in the first place. In the first issues of the books, he's this really self-conscious, nervous, nerdy high school kid. He gets this amazing ability, but he still has the exact same level of self-doubt and insecurity that he had before he got his super powers. It's what made him so likable and relatable. He's always trying to find his place in the world. You have big dreams and ambitions, but you're not sure if you're really going to be good enough, you know? It's about growing up.

**// TOM HOLLAND //** I wanted to see the youthful side of the character. He is a 15-year-old kid, and that's what makes him so amazing is that he's not a grown up. He's not a brilliant scientist. He is just simply

■ **WEB SLINGER:** Tom Holland is your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

a kid. That's very apparent in the comics, so when we were going through the script and then started shooting *Homecoming*, every opportunity we had to make him feel as youthful and as innocent as possible, we really tried to drive home. It's very important that kids in high school are able to see a superhero going through the same things that they're going through. Missing school, struggling with your chemistry homework, talking to girls. I think it's very reassuring that they know that they're not the only ones going through that. I wanted to make sure the audience can relate with

him, and also go along with his journey as if they're actually a part of it.

## THE CIVIL WAR CONNECTION

**// TOM HOLLAND //** You know, that whole thing was very surreal, if I'm honest. I mean, I was really thrown in the deep end. After the most bizarre and intense casting process I've ever been through, I was quickly thrown into shooting and my first scene was with Robert Downey Jr., which was as surreal as the idea of being Spider-Man was. I know it was a pretty crazy start for me. What's interesting about *Homecoming*

■ **MARVEL TEAM-UP:** Spider-Man swings into action with Tony Stark, aka Iron Man. In what may be a troubled partnership.





**// TOM HOLLAND //** He is such a presence, and such a nice guy. Watching him work is the best freaking time. He's somebody who's at the top, at the peak, and everyday he shakes everyone's hand, he says hello to everyone. He's professional, he's hardworking, he's kind, he's respectful, and for me the greatest lesson I've learned is that it doesn't matter how successful you get, or how much money you make, you should always treat people the same, and that's exactly what Robert does. And it's a huge testament to why he's so successful.

## TOM HOLLAND IS SPIDER-MAN

**// JON WATTS //** He's 21 now, but can really play 15 and is totally believable. His energy is so perfect for Peter Parker. It's this tiny bit of cockiness, but generally just big-hearted enthusiasm, gung-ho attitude about everything in life. That's what Tom Holland is like, too, so translating that into the character of Peter Parker was not difficult for him. And probably the most under-appreciated thing about Tom is his physicality. Because he was in *Billy Elliot* on stage, he had to go through such rigorous training to be a dancer. That gives you such control over your body and he uses that. Not only can he do things like back flips and amazing acrobatics, but he also just gives this full body performance that he has total control over. When you're wearing a mask, you need to maintain that personality, you know?

He told me he took classes that were acting without using your face. Some special class that he took in England to make sure all of that same exuberance and enthusiasm that I was talking about, that he has just naturally, comes across in his body. So he created all these physicalities for the character, that you absolutely know that's Tom in the suit when you watch the movie. It is a next-level physical performance.

## MICHAEL KEATON AS THE VULTURE

**// JON WATTS //** Michael Keaton brings his life experience and his filmography to the role no matter what. There's no way he could shake that. On top of that, he was just very thoughtful in his construction of the character. We worked on it together,

is that it feels like a superhero movie on a much smaller scale without losing any epic battles. I feel like I could've had a helping hand from Captain America or those guys at some point, because Spider-Man really does get put through it in this movie, but *Civil War* was the perfect sort of training part for me to really learn how to handle my own movie.

**// JON WATTS //** I always wanted to be very true to what happened in *Civil War*. That became a big driving point for the story, where he has been plucked from obscurity

■ **STARK DECISION:** Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark and Tom Holland as Peter Parker work on a way forward for Spider-Man.

by Tony Stark and has gone on the most incredible adventure you could ever go on as a 15-year-old kid, fighting alongside or against his heroes. Then, all that's over. Now what? You've got to go back to obscurity. You had your taste of the big leagues, but you're still in the minors. That's such a fun place to come from for this story. What they had done in *Civil War* became the jumping off point for the kind of story we wanted to tell in *Homecoming*.

## TONY STARK/IRON MAN: HE WHO MENTORS

**// JON WATTS //** That relationship that was established in *Civil War* is such a ripe one to explore: 'Tony himself' taking on this almost reluctant mentor position. Also, in the Marvel Universe, being the first superhero to publicly identify himself as Iron Man, he's been through this before, so he's taken a lot of hard knocks as a result. Now here he is, as this very sort of imperfect mentor to this kid whose life is completely turned upside down; just a fun relationship to explore. Also, just being able to work with Robert is such a treat. He brings so much magic with him in every scene. It's fun for me.



just crafting detail to backstory, to make it be a memorable character. We just talked about how [villains] wake up in the morning and think that they're [villains]. Villains think they're the good guy. They think they're the heroes. They just don't realize that no one else agrees. We tried to make sure that all of his motivations and his drives throughout the film made sense and was earned and had an emotional core to it, so that he didn't just come across as a one-dimensional villain.

**// TOM HOLLAND //** A dream come true, man. I've been a big fan of Michael Keaton since I was a kid, and he really is the Vulture. He embodied this character. An interesting thing about the Vulture is that he's not a super villain. He is not a billionaire. He's not a scientist. He's not a monster. He's just a regular bloke who isn't happy with what's happening in society, so he decides to stand up. And if a regular kid can become a superhero, then a regular guy should be able to become a super villain. That's exactly what Michael Keaton did. He really brought his sort of natural, gritty vibe to Adrian Toomes, and I really think fans are going to be terrified at what he did.

## SO WHAT IS IT ABOUT SPIDEY?

**// JON WATTS //** I keep thinking about this YouTube video that I saw of this little

■ **A BIRD IN THE HAND:** Michael Keaton ponders Iron Man's suit tech as the Man Who Would Be Vulture.



kid. He's, like, 4. It's his birthday party and there's a Spider-Man piñata that's about the same size as him. His mom is giving him the stick to smash the piñata to get the candy inside. She's showing him what to do, handing him the stick, showing him you gotta hit Spider-Man and break him open. He shakes his head no and puts the stick down. Then he goes over and he just gives the Spider-Man piñata a hug. There's just something about Spider-Man that you can't help but love and want to root for.

**// TOM HOLLAND //** Connecting with kids is probably the most important part of the job and they definitely connect with Spider-Man. I've gone to hospitals to see sick kids a couple of times. We did it once in Atlanta. We had a morning off, so we went in before shooting. My sister and I drove down to a children's hospital and we went to see them. We did it again in New York when we were shooting there. I had the day off today, so I asked my publicist if we could set it up. I show up in the costume, and I

definitely do take off the mask. It's a funny and heartbreaking experience, but also very fulfilling. Every time I do it, I realize how important it is to keep doing it. It shouldn't be used as a PR stunt, it shouldn't be used as a way of showcasing the movie. It should just be done, because that's what has to be done. You know? And a lot of my fellow Avengers feel the same.

## AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

**// TOM HOLLAND //** I was obviously incredibly nervous going onto the set of *Civil War*, because I was the new kid. I hadn't really done anything, and it was kind of daunting. And then I shot *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and felt great, because I thought I achieved it. I'd done the movie. I was the new Spider-Man. Then, as soon as I walked on the set of *Avengers: Infinity War* [due in 2018], all that confidence vanished. All of a sudden, I was on a movie that was even bigger than *Civil War*, so it was a bit of a reality check to realize just how huge these movies are.

■ **THWIP!** Holland tests out his web slinging moves for a special camera rig on the set of *Spider-Man: Homecoming*.



# SPIDER-MAN VIDEO GAME

by Matt Cabral

IF YOU'VE PLAYED A VIDEO GAME IN THE LAST 30 YEARS, YOU'VE LIKELY SWUNG AROUND A VIRTUAL WORLD AS SPIDER-MAN. Between movie adaptations, standalone titles, sequels, spin-offs, supporting roles and a regular spot in Marvel vs. Capcom's roster, the wall-crawling icon has appeared in more than 50 games.

While 2004's *Spider-Man 2* is widely considered the best of the bunch, the web-head's upcoming turn on PlayStation 4 is generating tons of positive buzz. The overwhelming hype for the PS4 exclusive, titled *Marvel's Spider-Man*, is not without merit, however. For starters, it's being developed by Insomniac Games, the veteran studio behind the *Spyro the Dragon*, *Ratchet & Clank*, and *Resistance* series.

The game's also being treated as a first-party release, meaning Sony is super-proud to have it landing exclusively on its hardware. Unveiled at the console-maker's E3 2016 media briefing, *Spider-Man* is one of the PS4's next major releases. Toss in a close collaboration with Marvel, which recently stated that games will represent one of the company's core pillars going forward, and Peter Parker's return to the interactive medium looks like a far cry from his

pixelated 1982 debut on the Atari 2600.

Promising pedigree aside, *Spider-Man*'s premise and gameplay seem to stand on their own. Details on its story are scarce, but we know the playable tale will be considered Marvel canon. Additionally, it isn't an adaptation of

*Spider-Man: Homecoming*, so it isn't creatively crippled by retelling the film's story. Rather than riding the movie's coattails, *Spider-Man* presents a unique tale.

In terms of how it looks and plays, the reveal trailer sported a visually stunning

THE REVEAL TRAILER SPORTED A VISUALLY STUNNING NEW YORK CITY WITH PS4-POWERED SPECIAL EFFECTS

New York City, PS4-powered special effects, and Spider-Man swinging between skyscrapers. When not treating the Big Apple like his personal playground, the spandex-clad hero chased bad guys with fluid, parkour-like moves, and combated

criminals with acrobatic style to spare.

All signs point to *Spider-Man* being the web-slinger's best interactive outing yet. Even if it falls short of our high expectations though, it should at least overshadow the haunting memories of Atari-era, square-headed Spidey.

by Edward Gross

# Marvel's Inhumans: From Dee



**YOU HAVE TO GIVE MARVEL STUDIOS CREDIT FOR ORIGINALITY.** Not only has it built an empire on the big screen since the 2008 release of *Iron Man*, but it's also conquering the small screen by taking the same types of chances. *Marvel's Inhumans* is a perfect example: Its two-hour premiere is being released theatrically exclusively in IMAX theaters in September for two weeks prior to the start of the eight-episode first season on ABC.

Marvel notes that the show will tell the story of the genetically enhanced royal family of Inhumans, which is splintered by a military coup and barely able to escape to Earth in general, Hawaii in particular.

"What stood out about it for me was that it was a show about family," says executive producer/showrunner Scott Buck, uttering the new f-word popularized by the *Fast and Furious* and *Guardians of the Galaxy* films. "I'm always drawn to projects that are about strong, interesting, compelling characters, and this one was about a group of them. There's a huge history of the Inhumans. There are so many comic books going back to the mid-'60s, but there's also so many different takes on them. Sometimes they're very serious and dark, and other times they're kind of silly and playful, so it allowed us to sift through all this and see what is most compelling. Because even then, what works in a comic book doesn't necessarily always easily translate to the screen. It's sifting through and figuring out what's going to make the most interesting story and what version of this or that character is the most compelling to us."

Roel Reiné, director of the IMAX premiere and whose previous directorial credits include the series *Black Sails*, has been challenged with creating a big-screen, IMAX-worthy premiere that leads into a television series in a very different format.

"The scope is huge, the ambition is huge," he explains. "Even from the locations that we picked to the sets that we designed and built. But you have to fall in love with these characters. You want to know how they continue. The series may have a little less scope, but

# Space to IMAX and Beyond

still has a lot of action and size to it. But what is really interesting is what these characters are developing into in those other episodes, where you're building to in their development, so you don't need the scope all the time. Even in my episodes, there are big scope moments, but also a lot of TV drama, close-ups, dialogue scenes, dramatic scenes that are really entertaining and wonderful and emotional. That's a big focus for me."

Regarding the characters themselves, Buck breaks it all down:

**Black Bolt (Anson Mount):** King of the Inhumans who doesn't speak, as the tiniest whisper would unleash a sonic wave that could level an entire city. "Difficult character to write. You have to really sort of get inside his brain and see everything through his eyes. You need someone to bring that to life, which is why we really responded to Anson, because he's someone eager to take on the challenge and he's been terrific so far."

**Medusa (Serinda Swan):** Bride of Black Bolt, her hair is a deadly weapon! "With Medusa, we needed this strong, almost fierce, kind of woman who also can be this very regal queen, and we found that with Serinda."

**Maximus (Iwan Rheon):** Brother of Black Bolt, he's devoted to his people but desires the Inhumans throne. "Our main

villain and perhaps the most complicated of our characters in some ways. We didn't want a standard villain. Instead, when you have the opportunity to watch, you'll see that he's perhaps our most tragic figure and we don't despise him. We understand his situation as the only human among all the Inhumans."

**Karnak (Ken Leung):** Cousin to Black Bolt, a close adviser with the power to see fault in virtually anything, whether it be plans, people or even structures. "He was actually the very first person we cast. Ken is so easily able to display the depth, the complexity, the inner mind of this brilliant character."

**Crystal (Isabelle Cornish):** Endowed with the ability to control the elements, she is Medusa's sister. "We needed someone who could really bring forth that princess quality, yet still feel real and relatable as a teenager. With Isabelle, we found exactly what we were looking for."

**Gorgon (Eme Ikwuakor):** Black Bolt's cousin and leader of the Inhumans military. "We wanted to create a character who was a powerful force, had an ego to match but also had to be incredibly likable. Eme just has this amazing charm that he brings to the character that just makes him instantly likable."

Additional characters include Auran (Sonya Blamores), in charge of the Royal Guards; Triton (Mike Moh), endowed with aquatic abilities; and the CG Lockjaw, a 2,000 pound dog endowed with the power of teleportation.

Musing on what audiences can expect from Inhumans, Reine reflects, "These characters are very grounded in reality and how normal people are — even if they have special skills or are like superheroes. What I really liked is the idea of being a superhero and seeing that view of the world, and what you kind of think about humans. And then finding yourself stranded on Earth and being forced to interact with humans."

"It's interesting, because it was a big conflict internally with them on how to act normal or be subject to a normal world when you're used to being a royal family. That is really appealing."

## MARVEL'S OTHER FIRST FAMILY

The Inhumans were first introduced in the pages of Marvel's classic *Fantastic Four* comic, about another dysfunctional superhero family. So far it's been a challenge to get Marvel's first Silver Age heroes right. Here's how they stack up:



### FANTASTIC FOUR (2005) (20TH CENTURY FOX)

Barbershop director Tim Story brought a light touch that worked perfectly for Michael Chiklis' turn as the Thing and Chris Evans' superhero debut as the Human Torch — but the action and a particularly bad take on Doctor Doom keeps this one earthbound.



### FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER (2007) (20TH CENTURY FOX)

The FF play second fiddle to a snazzy take on the Silver Surfer, played by Doug Jones and voiced by Lawrence Fishburne.



### FANTASTIC FOUR (2015)

Maybe the Tim Story FFs were too goofy, but Josh Trank's dark reboot is closer to the mood of the DC movies than Marvel's brighter comic universe.



■ IMAX-3D/MJM  
The Inhumans, coming soon to a movie theater and television set near you.

by Jeff Bond

# World's Finest

WONDER WOMAN  
SHOWS THE DC  
UNIVERSE CAN SHINE



DIRECTOR PATTY JENKINS' *WONDER WOMAN* is the best DC superhero movie so far. Convincingly presenting this classic comic book character to a contemporary audience — miniskirt, armored bustier, lasso, tiara and all — is an impressive achievement. Wonder Woman's quasi-magical powers and mythological background defy the gritty, grounded realism the DC movies strive for.

Jenkins already had a leg up with the casting of Gal Gadot as Diana Prince. Introduced as Wonder Woman in *Batman v Superman*, Gadot's Israeli accent solves the problem of presenting Wonder Woman at face value. The minute she speaks, her Diana Prince seems to hail from another time and place. Early on, Jenkins efficiently presents a lavish island of Amazons in which Chris Pine's pilot/spy Steve Trevor intrudes. Jenkins gets great chemistry from Pine and Gadot, allowing the movie to coast on their budding romance.

There's also fun to be had from Diana's fish-out-of-water introduction to London (*Pretty Woman*-style shopping montage included) and the world of men, as she searches for Ares, the god she believes has caused the First World War that threatens her secret island and the rest of the planet.

The action doesn't really get rolling until Diana takes charge on the battlefield, in a bravura "no man's land" sequence that is easily the highlight of the movie. Deflecting

machine-gun and rocket fire with her shield and leaping over the German lines in a single bound, Diana flexes her superhero muscles not out of some need for revenge or as a manly rite of passage, but out of compassion for the victims of warfare, even the Germans. This is why we watch superhero movies: to see someone help others and solve problems in a way no ordinary human being ever could.

The rest of the movie can't match those heights, although Jenkins and cinematographer Matthew Jensen serve up a banquet of iconic, fiery images of Wonder Woman in action. The movie's villains (including Danny Huston and Elena Alaya) are ineffectual, but Wonder Woman's final

battle with Ares has a point. When Ares tells her that humans, not gods, are responsible for the evil of war, Diana replies, "It's all about what you believe. I believe in love."

After early buzz pointed toward the film being another disappointment, Warner Bros. seemed blindsided by *Wonder Woman's* \$100 million-plus opening, and will have to scramble to sign Jenkins to a sequel. More importantly, the movie's success might finally open up the boys' club of blockbusters to female writers, directors and audiences. *Wonder Woman* may believe in love, but Hollywood believes in box office.



## DC FROM THE GROUND UP

Director and overseer Zack Snyder has established a vivid look for the first three movies in the DC universe. Here's how they stack up on disc:



### BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE (WARNER HOME VIDEO)

Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman made her crowd-pleasing debut in this set-up for the events of the upcoming *Justice League*, and Ben Affleck's no-nonsense Batman takes on Lex Luthor's gang and the Man of Steel himself in some vivid action sequences.

### MAN OF STEEL (WARNER HOME VIDEO)

Henry Cavill more than looks the part as Superman, and the city-smashing finale is a great showcase for 4K.

Michael Shannon's General Zod is a solid villain but Russell Crowe's Jor-El almost manages to steal the movie.



### SUICIDE SQUAD (WARNER HOME VIDEO)

*Suicide Squad's* characters — including one of Will Smith's best recent roles as Deadshot and a killer Harley Quinn from Margot Robbie — make it at least as fun and entertaining as its predecessors.



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PS4 ACTIVISION



# APE ANGST

CAESAR'S PLATE IS FULL  
IN WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

by Edward Gross

THE PLANET OF THE APES FRANCHISE has always embraced the bleak, whether it was the discovery of the remnants of the Statue of Liberty at the climax of the 1968 original; the literal destruction of this world in its 1970 sequel, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*; or a deadly viral infection spreading to most of humanity in the tag of the 2011 reboot, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. Unfortunately, the chances of a happier ending don't look so good in this summer's

*War for the Planet of the Apes*, either.

In *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, released three years ago, the simian leader, Caesar (Andy Serkis) found himself drawn into a conflict between his people and a colony of surviving humans, triggered by the actions of his ape brother, Koba (Toby Kebbell). Now, in *War*, the battle has escalated, with many casualties among the apes. In addition, Caesar is finding himself drawn further into a bloody conflict with

The Colonel (Woody Harrelson).

"When it came to the next film after *Dawn*," explains writer Mark Bomback, "[Director] Matt Reeves very smartly said to Fox, 'Look, we can't rush this. Mark and I need to just step into a vacuum a bit and really brainstorm, and we don't have any real preconceptions going in.' All we asked for was a screening room at the studio and access to whatever films we wanted to watch."



The concept was to watch two films a day that represented different tones they were going for in the writing, and usually out of those screenings they would find one or two ideas to build on. "Different movies for different reasons," Bomback says. "And we kept the studio at bay until we felt that we could really define what we were doing, because they were understandably concerned about what this next film could be."

Reeves, who next will be directing Ben Affleck in *The Batman*, elaborates, "When Mark and I sat down to try and take this to a different place, to push it further, we knew that the war was going to begin; the war that Koba had started that could not be put back into the bottle. But it was important that we took Caesar to a new place and to new extremes, and to do that, I wanted to make it truly a Caesar, or ape, point-of-view movie. We watched a lot of war movies

**PULL THE STRING:** Simian bowmen let fly in the new *Planet of the Apes* movie.

and wanted this to be a war movie in an ambitious sense, which was that while the landscape was about this grand scale war, it was about the character interaction in the forefront that was going to resonate emotionally and thematically."

The breakthrough for the duo came from a moment in *Dawn* when Caesar said to his son, Blue Eyes, that he always held apes in higher regard than humans, but had come to realize — thanks to the actions of Koba

— how similar the two species really are.

Laughs Bombback, "It's that sort of crazy mirror that *Planet of the Apes* does, where it's an ape discovering how animal he is. It's the reverse of what a normal storyline would be of a human in a wartime situation discovering how base he can be. This is an ape that thinks himself more elevated than humans, realizing that the worst parts of him are these human parts that he's inherited." According to Bombback, *War* manages to take this idea to the next level: examining the legend of Caesar and how that eventually becomes the myth of Caesar, positioning him as a kind of Moses figure for ape society.

"Any time we talk about the film, we point out that it's called *Planet of the Apes*," Bombback explains. "It's not a mystery that apes will ultimately inherit the Earth. The reason this is called *War* is not simply that Caesar is at war with the humans, but there is war going on within Caesar. And the question is, what is Caesar capable of allowing himself to do in the service of protecting his people? How much darkness is Caesar willing to allow into his own heart in order to attain for his people the victory that they need?"

"It's really a war for Caesar's heart and his soul," Reeves emphasizes. "In *Dawn* he had a blindspot, which is he was both human and ape. In that he was raised by humans, and he was an ape, yet he was also an outsider to both of those communities. That made him the perfect bridge to peace. He had seen compassion and decency and empathy from humans, even though he's also seen a really terrible side of humanity. Koba had never seen that, which also meant that Caesar didn't have a total understanding of Koba's situation; that there was never a way that Koba could have imagined living among humans after he was treated the way that he had been by them."

This war within Caesar comes down to how much he's willing to forgive humans due to his unique history with them, and to what extent he's willing to break from them permanently. "It was important that we took Caesar to a new place and to new extremes," Reeves points out. "We had to push him to the place where he would start



■ COLONEL CHAOS: The Colonel (too, in sunglasses) with a gorilla lieutenant; Director Matt Reeves (in white) on the set.

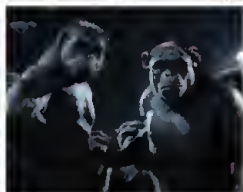
to lose the empathy that he has, and then make this a story about him fighting to hold onto his soul, to maintain his humanity. That's the test of the movie. It ends up becoming a battle of wills between him and The Colonel. What he experiences in that battle results in him trying to find some way to maintain empathy."

In a sense, Caesar's struggle connects him more to The Colonel than either might initially expect. Bombback says, "They are, in a sense, confronting the same challenge, which is, what are you willing to sacrifice within yourself in order to preserve your species? And The Colonel is not nefarious. He believes with as much certainty as Caesar believes that he is the one person that can deliver his people. In a sense, he's

the best human character we've created, because in some ways he is a very, very particular foil for Caesar."

For his part, Serkis praises the film's ability to balance the viewpoints so as not to pass judgment on either character. "It's done in such a way that you can make up your own mind," he says. "It forces you to enter your own moral maze as to which side you wish to follow, or if you indeed end up following either side. Everyone is trying to survive, so it's an equal playing field in many ways. It's certainly not that this is about apes beating up the humans or vice versa. Everyone's in it together, in a way, in a desperate situation."

Reeves compares Harrelson's character to Kurtz from *Apocalypse Now*, or its source material, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*:





# GREAT APES

THE BEST APE CHARACTERS ON DISC

by Jeff Bond

## KING KONG

### KING KONG (1933)

Kong was the giant ape that begat them all — really all giant monsters, since his 1933 thriller was the prototypical monster movie. The stop-motion monster scared the heck out of audiences in the '30s, but Kong's strangely moving death scene on the Empire State Building gave him a kind of humanity. Unfortunately, later filmmakers from John Guillermin to Peter Jackson ran with that development, to the point that in Jackson's 2005 blockbuster, Kong was learning sign language and practically dating Naomi Watts. The recent *Kong: Skull Island* at least put more of the monster back in the big guy.



► **KING KONG**  
(Universal Studios Home Entertainment)  
You'll have no Kong questions left after sampling the commentaries and special features on this Blu-ray of the 2005 *King Kong*.



## MECHA KONG

### KING KONG ESCAPES (1967)

At the climax of this goofy Japanese take on Kong, Mecha Kong steals Kong's girl and climbs up the Japanese equivalent of the Eiffel Tower, taunting Kong with his annoying high-glare eyeball lights and internal mouth megaphones. Rest assured that Kong turns Mecha Kong into pure recyclables by the end of the movie.

► **KING KONG ESCAPES**  
(Universal Studios Home Entertainment)



## ZIRA

### PLANET OF THE APES (1968)

Chimpanzee scientist Zira (Kim Hunter) consistently butts heads with human Taylor (Charlton Heston), her superiors in ape society, and with her fellow scientist husband Cornelius (Roddy McDowall). She also anchors *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* as an ape commenting on contemporary humanity.

► **PLANET OF THE APES**  
(Fox Home Video)



## KING LOUIE

### THE JUNGLE BOOK (2016)

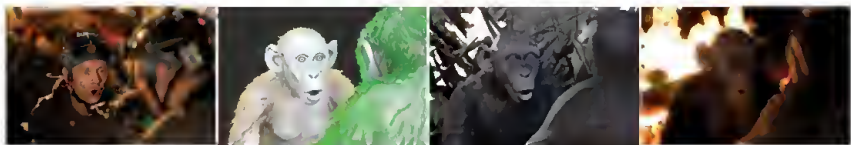
Christopher Walken as a singing, dancing, terrifying proto-orangutan takeoff on Marlon Brando from *Apocalypse Now*? It doesn't get much better — or weirder — than that in this Oscar-winning mix of live action and computer animation.

► **THE JUNGLE BOOK**  
(Walt Disney Studios)

"He's kind of struggling to find a way to make sense of a world that was absolutely brutal, and how he became more brutal because of the world itself, and how that pitted him against Caesar. And because of the circumstances they were in together, it threatens to do that to Caesar as well. In a way, they are a reflection of each other."

Serkis concurs with this notion, adding, "Caesar sees within The Colonel a sense that they have a shared responsibility to their own kind. So there's an understanding where leadership can take you, how important it is. Caesar loses sight of his empathy, and that is very much where The Colonel is. It's this man who's been desensitized, dehumanized. I think at the point where Caesar meets him and spends

■ **EVOLUTION:**  
Caesar on horseback (top) and actor Andy Serkis (above, left) portraying Caesar in motion capture gear.



■ MAN TO APE: Actor Steve Zahn (left) transformed into a chimpanzee by Weta Digital effects.

time with him, he is almost on the verge of becoming that. And then, hopefully, he recognizes that that is not a good place to go."

Harrelson, who is currently shooting the untitled "Young Han Solo" film, views The Colonel as someone who, in apocalyptic times, has decided that he must take certain actions to ensure the survival of humanity.

"It's something he's taken upon himself," Harrelson explains. "He's had a great deal of personal tragedy, and through all of this it's made him into a leader. You gotta look at your guy as very positive, although I'm sure the audience might see it differently. He's certainly not the hero of the piece, but he's certainly, in his own mind, making a great deal of sacrifice to get things done."

"At first there's literally no — I guess you could use the word humanity — in his reflection of who Caesar is," he continues. "But then he meets Caesar and he finds

that he has a good deal of respect for him. Caesar has character and stands up to him when it's very dangerous to his wellbeing to do so, but on behalf of the other apes he does so. I think begrudgingly at first, and then in a growing way, he comes to really respect Caesar. He does go through some sort of change in position; at first he just wants to eliminate the leader of the apes, but then he grows to respect him."

Reeves interjects that The Colonel is moved by the incredible intelligence in Caesar, as well as his empathy and leadership. "He's looking into the eyes of an animal and seeing something deeper and greater," the director states. "Something that reflects in a way what you think of as the best in humanity. You're the best of us. That's the whole idea for me that's so exciting about the franchise and, thematically, the whole idea of looking at intelligent apes is just holding the mirror up to ourselves."



► **CAESAR'S WARRIOR COLLECTION** (Fox Home Video)  
Both *Rise and Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* on Blu-Ray, packaged with a scary bust of Caesar.

# TIMELINE OF THE APES!

Keeping track of the chronology of the *Planet of the Apes* movie series can be tricky. Fortunately, you can purchase almost all the movies individually or in Caesar's intimidating box set. Just make sure you watch them in this order:

by Jeff Bond

1

## RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES/ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

Was it a radical Alzheimer's treatment or a time-traveling couple of talking space chimps who gave rise to Caesar, the ape leader who would bring about the fall of humanity? Depends on which one of these you watch first.

2

## DAWN OF THE PLANET OF THE APES/CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

It's a tale of two Caesars: *Conquest's* well-spoken Roddy McDowall as a budding, and *Dawn's* more primitive Andy Serkis.

3

## WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

Will this one finally set the stage for a full-blown ape civilization? Only Woody Harrelson stands in the way.

4

## BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES

The conflict between peace-loving Caesar and the warlike gorilla Aldo (Claude Akins) mirrors the showdown between Caesar and Koba in *Dawn*.

5

## PLANET OF THE APES

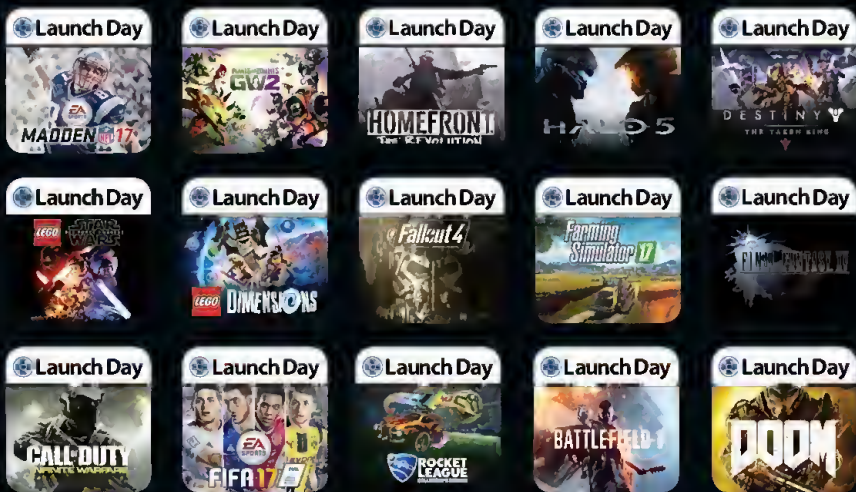
A planet where apes evolved from men? The monumental Chuck Heston is your shackled tour guide in the original, brilliant 1968 sci-fi adventure.

6

## BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES

Charlton Heston rigged this 1970 follow up so he could detonate a doomsday bomb at the end, destroying ape planet and, he hoped, any additional *Apes* movies.

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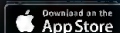
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DAVID LEITCH LOVES A GOOD FIGHT scene. Given his two decades as a stunt man, the fact that he served as an uncredited co-director of *John Wick* and is credited as the director of *July's Atomic Blonde* and *Deadpool 2* — the shooting of which he stepped away from to talk to *Geek* — that love is reassuring.

"The reason fight scenes are so important to film is that they're personal and they bring the characters together," he says. "They bring you face to face and they can be very emotional. Sometimes with these big CG-set piece movies, you're so detached from the characters that it loses something. It's great for spectacle, but it really isn't emotional and isn't as rewarding as when you watch a great fight scene — which, by the way, is a fraction of the cost to produce. And they're more visceral."

*Atomic Blonde* has got visceral written all over it. Inspired by the graphic novel *The Coldest City*, the film's setting is Berlin in 1989, on the eve of the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The expected shift in alliances between the world's superpowers is in danger from a spy ring intent on triggering World War III. Enter Charlize Theron's British agent Lorraine Broughton, who teams up with James McAvoy's David Percival, Berlin station chief. They attempt to keep things on track.

Says Leitch, "When I read it, I thought about the city of Berlin, where I've done six movies and I was, like, 'But Berlin is nothing like this. Berlin is punk rock. Berlin is graffiti. Berlin is gray on one side and colorful on the other. How do I make this rock and roll?' I started to deconstruct what was on the page and tried to make it what I call a punk-rock spy thriller. As we started to add music and set-piece ideas, it became its own beast. I made an outline and I pitched it to Charlize Theron and said, 'This is the movie I would like to make this into.' She was, like, 'That sounds cool. Let's do that.'"

Leitch looked at the film as a wish-fulfillment retrospective on the '80s,



by Edward Gross

## DIRECTOR DAVID LEITCH GOES ATOMIC

■ GLAM SLAM. Charlize Theron opens up a can of substantial hurt in *Atomic Blonde*.

aggregating the vibe of that period's action films as well as the music video motif.

"I guess I'm nostalgic for it, because it's definitely the era I grew up in," he reflects. "But I think those movies really defined the everyman, empathetic action character, like John McClane in *Die Hard*. He's got problems, but we like him. We worry about his family. The bigger solve is the relationship problem, but it's all wrapped up in crazy action. He's a little underserved. His villains are a little bit stronger and tougher, and he's got to rise to the occasion and you've got to beat him up to see him succeed. I just don't think you could do it better than they did it; ever since I saw that movie, I've been striving to achieve

that with the characters that I design in action films."

Part of that design regarding *Atomic Blonde* is to not dwell on the fact that the lead character is a woman.

"I just wasn't going to address it," he says matter-of-factly. "They're not going to say, 'She's the best female spy we have.' They're just going to say, 'She's one of our best agents.' We're going to put a female character in there and treat her like a quintessential male character in one of these movies. By doing that, it feels provocative to some people, but at the end of the day it's really satisfying. It's real; there are spies in the world that are taking the same risks and going through the same



hardships as male spies. She's dealing with the same issues of not knowing who to trust and where to find intimacy when everybody lies. It's classic."

Leitch allows that audiences might feel more for a female character than a male one, especially when the woman is being beat up by six Russians. "The character of Lorraine is complex," he says. "She's cold and empathetic, strong and resilient, but she's got this humanity to her. It's not unlike James Bond. I don't see it working better because she's a female. We just didn't want to make it feel different."

As to what Theron brings to the part, Leitch points to her tremendous acting skills and credibility, and her ability to

thread the needle of making a character who is so "icy cold" and indomitable also seem vulnerable, mysterious and empathetic.

"There's so much mystery going on with very little to latch onto until things start to be uncovered. It's like the amount of emotion that she can give in a look, the amount of risks that she'll take as an actor, that puts her in the right position to make this character come alive," Leitch explains. "And the amount of trust that she had in me in delivering these ultra-violent action scenes put us in the right place at the right time in the movie. Without an actress like that, you can't do a movie like this."

■ **SPY TALK:**  
Director David Leitch confers with Theron.



## WICK TO CHOOSE?

by Jeff Bond

2014's Keanu Reeves action thriller *John Wick* has to be one of the biggest surprises of the decade: a no-nonsense, hands-on revenge tale that instantly turned Reeves from a post-*Matrix* footnote into a grizzled movie star presence cooler than Neo ever was. It's eminently worth revisiting, especially in 4K, where its brutal, no-CG fight action and gunplay sizzles under Jonathan Sela's gleaming cinematography. *John Wick Chapter 2* is a slightly less satisfying, more stylized slow burn, but its European locations still enhance writer Derek Kolstad's secret assassin society concept.

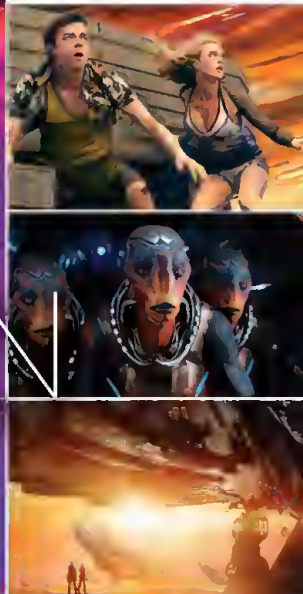


Theron is not without experience in this area: From *2 Days in the Valley* to *Aeon Flux* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*, she's proven herself more than capable of handling action. But *Atomic Blonde* might be her magnum opus.



by Edward Gross

# VALERIAN AND THE CITY OF A THOUSAND PLANETS



FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE, WRITER/DIRECTOR LUC BESSON HAS LOVED THE SCIENCE-FICTION GENRE, a passion that is reflected in films like *The Fifth Element*, *Lucy* and this summer's *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*.

The latter, based on the French weekly comic *Valerian and Laureline*, takes place in the 28th Century and focuses on a pair of special operatives the Minister of Defense sent out to Alpha, an ever-expanding metropolis nicknamed the City of a Thousand Planets. There, they face a dark force that threatens all existence. It's up to Valerian (Dane DeHaan) and Laureline (Cara Delevingne) to identify this menace and ultimately save the universe.

"I've read the comic books since I was 10 years old," Besson explains. "At the time, it was two pages every Wednesday in a magazine. You basically had to wait six months to read the entire story. In France at the time, there were two TV channels, one in black and white, one in color, and the only way to escape were these comics. Probably the first woman I fell in love with was Laureline when I was 10. And this kind of comic book built myself. I was living in the countryside, I would open my

■ **SPACE CASES:** Dane DeHaan (above) is Valerian, preparing to mount a secret mission in Luc Besson's new movie.

window and see cows. I wanted to escape, and every Wednesday it was *Valerian and Laureline*."

As to the movie version, he sees it pretty simply: "It's a boy and a girl. They have fun, they love each other, but they don't want to say it. He's [like] a puppy. He's watching all the girls, and she's very old-fashioned. For her, you fall in love with one man, you get married, you have kids. Just like that. It's today, but with aliens and fighting. I love the contrast of that. It's very human. That's the thing I wanted to keep since the beginning. Basically, the story is the guy's going to get the girl."

As excited as he was when *The Fifth Element* was released in 1997, he swore never to do an effects-heavy film again,

though changes in technology — and what that allows him to achieve — have changed his mind.

"*Fifth Element* was the last film done with old-fashioned special effects," Besson says. "If I had a green screen, I'd have to lock my camera in one place, and they'd put dots on the screen for hours. It was a nightmare. And then six hours later, digital arrived and, basically, you can put your camera on your shoulder and they say, 'Oh, we can do it later.' I was, like, 'Are you kidding?'"

"I was really frustrated when *The Fifth Element* came out," he adds. "I always said to myself, you will avenge one day. And now I avenge!"

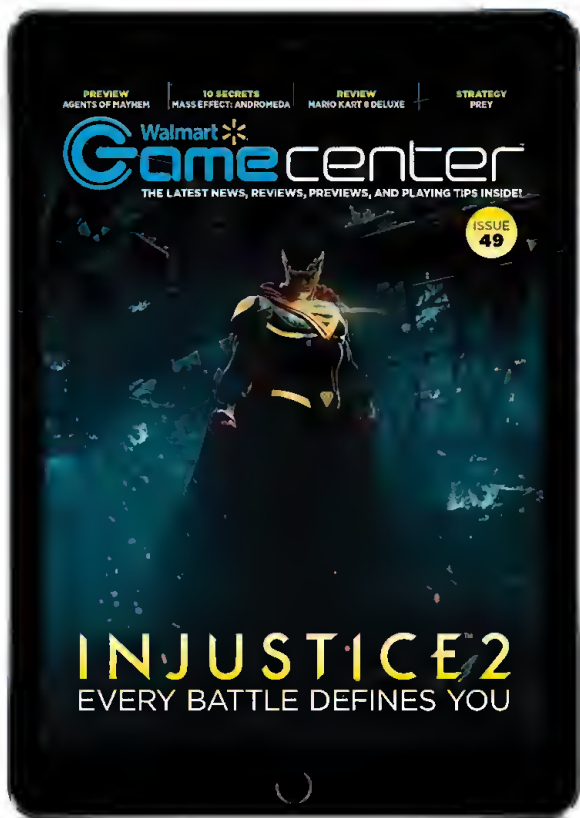
*Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* debuts in theaters July 21.



## THE FIFTH ELEMENT MUST BE FOUND ON UHD

With *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* marking Luc Besson's first return to epic space opera since *The Fifth Element*, it's only fitting that the 1997 movie will be making its UHD debut in July, allowing fans to experience the movie's eye-searing color palette and multi-layered, groundbreaking visual effects work in stupendous 4K detail. Look for it July 11 at Walmart and Walmart.com.

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by Cody Stasiak

# THE STAR WARS SPIN-OFFS WE WANT TO SEE

SINCE DISNEY ACQUIRED LUCASFILM AND THE STAR WARS FRANCHISE, EVERY YEAR IS NOW A STAR WARS YEAR. Beginning with *The Force Awakens*, *Star Wars* VII-IX continue the saga of the Skywalker family, but *Rogue One* opened the door for *Star Wars* spin-offs that have nothing to do with Luke and Leia. So here are our suggestions for the non-Skywalker stories that will get fans standing in line.

B

## Lost Stars

■ Claudia Gray's young adult novel *Lost Stars* focuses on two childhood friends, Thane Kyrell and Ciena Ree, who eventually find themselves on opposite sides of the Galactic Civil War. This sort of split narrative would



allow for a unique movie that focuses equally on the Imperials and the Rebels. In addition to Thane and Ciena, the novel also features an interesting cast of

supporting characters and allows for cameos from characters already well established in the universe.

The novel ends with the Battle of Jakku, and even specifically tells us how the *Star Destroyer* that we see Rey speed past in *TFA* was brought down, which would make for an amazing climax on the big screen.

7

## Doctor Aphra

■ One of the most interesting and most popular new characters introduced to the *Star Wars* canon is Doctor Aphra. Originally created by Kieron Gillen for the Darth Vader comic, Doctor Aphra has become a fan favorite and is now starring in her own comic, also written by Gillen. As awesome as the comics are, it would be fantastic to see her make the leap to the big screen. She's an archaeologist, so imagine an Indiana Jones-esque movie set in the *Star Wars* universe. This would allow Disney and Lucasfilm



to delve hundreds if not thousands of years into the past without actually setting a story within The Old Republic timeframe.

B

## Cassian Andor & K2-SO

■ Last year, *Rogue One* brought us a slew of new characters. Though some of them were more or less one note, Diego Luna's turn as the Rebel Intelligence operative Cassian Andor stood out. When we meet him on the Ring of Kafene, we quickly see that he's willing to do whatever it takes to acquire desperately needed intel for the Rebellion — except for killing Jyn Erso's dad. It would be interesting to see more of the morally questionable decisions that led him to spearhead the rogue operation to Scarif.

A film featuring Cassian and his cantankerous droid companion K2-SO could be a brilliant way for Lucasfilm and Disney to further explore the early days of the Rebellion in a gritty way. The film could simply set the two of them traveling to various seedy locales to obtain information the Rebellion needs. Plus, who doesn't want to see more of K2-SO?

B

## A Yoda Story

■ Though he's had a heavy influence on the events of *Star Wars*, we know very little about Yoda. After all, by the time he



meets Luke in *The Empire Strikes Back*, he is already

over 900 years old. We've always known him as the wise old Jedi Master, even in the prequel trilogy — which is why Yoda is the perfect candidate for a spin-off prequel.

Wouldn't it be amazing to see Yoda in his prime as a Knight of the Jedi order? Also, because Yoda's species live such long lives, Lucasfilm and Disney could set a Yoda movie hundreds of years prior to the events of the prequel trilogy, shedding some light on a period that is unexplored in the current canon.

5

## Young Lando

■ While we were initially skeptical about the young Han Solo project, one of the casting announcements that really helped bring doubting fans around was Donald Glover as a young Lando Calrissian. Glover certainly has the talent and swagger to step into the role Billy Dee Williams made iconic. However, he likely won't get much screen time, as the story will focus on Han.



A heist film or a movie detailing how Lando took over the mining operation on Cloud City would be perfect for Glover.

4

## Ahsoka Tano

■ As the first person in the Jedi order to figure out that Anakin Skywalker was a total whack job—a realization that prompted her to leave the Jedi and help found the Rebel Alliance—Ahsoka arguably has the most powerful dramatic character arc in the entire *Star Wars* canon. Rosario Dawson is already lobbying to play her in any live-action project.



A movie could follow a younger Ahsoka immediately after she leaves the Jedi order or explore where Ahsoka has been since she faced off with Vader in *Rebels*.

3

## Bounty Hunters/Boba Fett

■ Any movie involving the Mandalorian bounty hunter is appealing, as it would undoubtedly take us into the depths of the criminal underworld from the perspective of a bounty hunter. An even cooler movie would involve a gang of other well-known bounty hunters, such as IG-88, Bossk, Dengar or even Cad Bane. Bounty hunters don't play well with others, but a plot involving a number of them hunting the same prey would be a natural. Plus we have to see Boba disintegrate someone right?



2

## Darth Vader Hunting Jedi

■ It would be great to see a standalone movie, set shortly after *Revenge of the Sith*, in which Vader tracks down those Jedi who survived Order 66. Just imagine: We'd



get to see Vader at the height of his power as he builds a name for himself in Palpatine's newfound Empire. Obi-

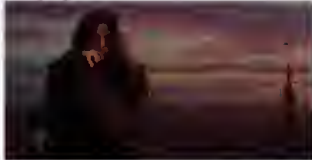
Wan specifically says in *A New Hope* that Vader helped hunt down and destroy the Jedi, so it's about time we saw that put to film.

2

## Obi-Wan Standalone

■ The one thing fans unanimously agree on regarding the prequel trilogy is that Ewan McGregor portrayed a fantastic young Obi-Wan. It's been more than a decade since he last played the role, but McGregor's getting to the age at which he could perfectly reprise the role during Obi-Wan's exile on Tatooine, where he watched over Luke.

So far in the new canon, Obi-Wan has been used sparingly in that time frame. Thus, it would be very easy to involve him in some sort of local trouble on Tatooine. After all, plenty of criminal



elements inhabit the planet, not to mention the other dangers in the wasteland. Obi-Wan is arguably the most popular character in the franchise, and McGregor has already said he'd love to reprise the role. There's really no reason not to do it. Let's hope the powers that rule the *Star Wars* universe make this the next standalone movie.

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**[WARNER HOME VIDEO]**

If you were underwhelmed by the *Star Wars* prequels, this animated series tells the story of Anakin Skywalker's turn to the dark side with a lot more sophistication.



### ROBOT CHICKEN STAR WARS EPISODES 1-3

**[WARNER HOME VIDEO]**

Mego action figures perform some brilliantly rude takeoffs on our favorite *Star Wars* heroes

in this collection of episodes from Seth Green's comedy series, featuring a crushing five hours of bonus material.



### LEGO STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT

**[20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT]**

*Star Wars* the Lego way has never been funnier as Luke

Skywalker starts to regret his galactic reputation as a "Death Star Blower Upper."

by Mark A. Altman

# 2+2=4K

HOME THEATER HAS NEVER LOOKED THIS GOOD, THANKS TO 4K ULTRA HD

RECENTLY, LIKE MANY OF YOU, I MADE THE PLUNGE INTO 4K ULTRA HD DISCS. A veteran of the home video wars, my munitions through the years have included everything from Fotonovels (don't ask!) to LaserDiscs, and now UHD Blu-ray. With the ubiquitousness and ease of use that streaming offers, it's no secret 4K is not a household name. Even those of us who care about getting the very best quality out of our home systems will fall prey to the lure of streaming for its simple convenience.

I embrace UHD because I don't want to be part of the demise of physical media and be at the mercy of streaming services that lack the quality and special features of discs — and can disappear overnight at the behest of studio heads or filmmakers who start making changes in their work. I want to know I can watch what I own, whenever I want, always in the version I purchased. Besides, virtually all of today's 4K Ultra HDs include a redeemable code for a digital copy of the film that you can add to your Vudu collection or digital storage locker. If you're considering making the jump to UHD, here are some must-own discs that will showcase your system to maximum advantage and include backwards compatible standard Blu-Rays as well in the event you haven't made the leap yet into 4K.



## PASSENGERS (SONY HOME ENTERTAINMENT)

The unmistakable star power of Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt, along with the film's stellar production design, make *Passengers* another worthy disc. With the requisite bonus features, this version offers a preview of *Passengers*' Awakening Virtual Reality Experience.



## MAD MAX: FURY ROAD (WARNER HOME VIDEO)

This straight 4K release is low on special features, but George Miller's revelatory action movie qualifies as a special feature in itself. *Fury Road*'s first 20 minutes boast eyeball-searing imagery such as semitrucks being sucked up into a raging desert storm, so you'll feel you got your money's worth before the movie's halfway point.



## LOGAN (20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT)

James Mangold's high-octane superhero western noir is the zenith of the Wolverine saga, anchored by a tour de force performance by Hugh Jackman in his swan song in the role. Along with the first-rate sound and picture, bonus features include a beautiful black-and-white version of the film, *Logan Noir*.



## ARRIVAL (PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO)

This isn't *E.T.* or *Close Encounters*, but it is a triumph for auteur Denis Villeneuve, who tells a remarkably different first contact story. The film really showcases UHD's DTS-HD Master Audio, as well as the remarkably vivid blacks courtesy of HDR. Another film proving that smart is cool, contemporary sci-fi doesn't get much cooler than *Arrival*.

by Jeff Bond

# BOX SET BONANZA



## THE MARTIAN: EXTENDED EDITION

(20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT)

This extended cut — 10 additional minutes — of Ridley Scott's visually sumptuous adaptation of Andy Weir's remarkable novel features a plethora of phenomenal and in-depth special features, about the making of the film and a gag reel. It's the next best thing to being in space.



## STAR TREK BEYOND

(PARAMOUNT HOME VIDEO)

Whether you love the new J.J. Abrams films or loathe them, the latest *Trek* installment from *Fast & Furious* mastermind Justin Lin looks sensational on 4K, with dark inky blacks and enough sonic power to blast you into the 23rd century at warp speed. Special features, including a tribute to the late Leonard Nimoy, are welcome additions.

## THE EIGHT MOVIE AND TV BOX SET COLLECTIONS YOU MUST POSSESS

Nothing proclaims your love for a favorite TV or movie series like a gigantic digital disc collection hogging your shelf space, and we have a few to recommend.



## DC Comics Starter Pack: First Seasons Arrow/The Flash Gotham

WARNER BROS.

Why are DC TV shows always better than DC movies? Find out by watching the first seasons of the CW's *Arrow* and *The Flash* (maybe the best superhero TV show season ever), plus the dark and gritty *Gotham*, home of Batman-in-waiting and all his villainous enemies.



## Star Wars The Complete Saga

FOX HOME VIDEO

If you believe the *Star Wars* movies began and ended with the prequels and the original trilogy, then this is your set: all six movies, plus commentaries and special features.



## Harry Potter: The Complete 8-Film Collection

WARNER BROS.

As a kid you had to wait eight years to watch all the *Harry Potter* movies, but now you can sit through them all over one long weekend (or day if you use Hermione's Time Turner). But it'll take you another weekend to go through all the interviews and special features in this box set.



## The Alien Quadrilogy

FOX HOME VIDEO

Revisit the glory days of xenomorphs with the first four *Alien* films: Ridley Scott's creepy 1979 *Alien*, James Cameron's powerhouse 1986 sequel *Aliens*, David Fincher's grim *Alien3* and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's incredibly French *Alien: Resurrection*. In addition, hours of amazing special features should get you ready for Scott's *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant*.



## Game of Thrones Complete Seasons 1-6

HBO HOME VIDEO

Six seasons of intrigue have seriously reduced the number of possible claimants to the Iron Throne. Catch up now before everyone in this incredible series bites the dust.



## Battlestar Galactica: The Complete Epic Series

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Are you a Cylon? Laugh now, but after watching all four seasons of this acclaimed sci-fi series plus loads of behind-the-scenes special features, you might not be so sure.



## Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot: The Complete Series

SHOUT FACTORY

Turns out you can do all sorts of crazy things with a 100-foot-tall robot that obeys your commands — or so little Johnny Sokko of Japan discovered in this wild 1967 show. Four discs of adventures show Johnny's giant robot laying waste to giant monsters, invading aliens and criminals with his super strength, finger missiles and laser-beam eyes.



## The X-Files: The Complete Series

FOX HOME VIDEO

Follow Mulder and Scully down the rabbit hole of alien infiltration, oddball experiments, mutant monsters and of course, a whole bunch of government conspiracies to cover it all up. This mammoth box set collects all 11 seasons of the show, along with too many commentaries, interviews and behind-the-scenes features to count.

# Next-Gen Gaming is Here

by Matt Cabral

WITH BOTH PLAYSTATION 4 AND XBOX ONE LANDING IN LIVING ROOMS IN THE FALL OF 2013, we've had less than four years to put these powerful platforms through their paces. Still, with last year's release of the PlayStation 4 Pro, and the Xbox One X arriving soon, it seems a new console generation is already in full swing — sort of.

You see, where hardware makers would typically squeeze every last polygon from their existing systems before launching a new one, Sony and Microsoft are shaking up the status quo. Rather than waiting 8-10 years before releasing new consoles, the two companies have opted to sell significantly upgraded versions of their existing game boxes.

More a mid-cycle evolution than a full-on start to a new console generation, these peppy machines offer discerning fans the opportunity to invest in the latest, graphics-pushing tech, not unlike upgrading a PC with newer, more powerful parts. Of course, the plug-and-play nature of consoles ensures you won't have to crack open hardware cases or install complex software

to enjoy the benefits of these mid-generation advancements.

Since these enhanced platforms are part of the current generation, they play the same games as their systems' earlier iterations — they just play them better. Players who want to dive into *Halo's* next chapter or play the upcoming *God of War* sequel can do so on the Xbox One or PS4 they already own. But if they upgrade to an Xbox One X or a PS4 Pro, they will enjoy a better playing experience, with sharper graphics, better resolution, stunning lighting effects and enhanced sound.

## SPECK CHECK

WHILE IT'S BEST TO JUDGE A GAME MACHINE BY THE SELECTION AND QUALITY OF ITS SOFTWARE, IT doesn't hurt to look under the hood. With that in mind, here's how the Xbox One X and PS4 Pro compare on paper.

|                          | Xbox One X            | PS4 Pro        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>CPU:</b>              | 2.3 GHz custom 8-core | 2.1 GHz 8-core |
| <b>GPU:</b>              | 6 Teraflops           | 4.20 Teraflops |
| <b>MEMORY:</b>           | 12 GB GDDR5           | 8 GB GDDR5     |
| <b>MEMORY BANDWIDTH:</b> | 326 GB/s              | 218 GB/s       |
| <b>HARD DRIVE:</b>       | 1 TB                  | 1 TB           |
| <b>OPTICAL DRIVE:</b>    | UHD Blu-ray           | Blu-ray        |

## XBOX STRIKES BACK WITH XBOX ONE X

CALLING ITS NEXT-GENERATION ENTRY "THE MOST POWERFUL CONSOLE EVER," MICROSOFT IS aiming to give even high-end PCs a run for their teraflops. The Xbox One X's specs substantially improve upon its predecessor's. While both versions will play the same games, expect the graphical and performance jump to be significant on the One X.

Boasting native 4K gaming and HDR (high dynamic range) capability, the platform will produce razor-sharp details, a more vibrant, wider range of colors, and the sort of retina-searing effects usually reserved for the silver screen.

The polished visual presentation will be further complemented by a hefty performance boost, promising to make problems such as stuttering frame-rates and graphical pop-in a thing of the past.

One X's under-the-hood power also aims to pretty-up your existing Xbox One library, as well as backward-compatible Xbox 360 titles. Mixed

media fans can also expect their movies and television shows to look snazzier than ever, thanks to the system's 4K-streaming support and built-in Ultra HD Blu-ray player. And while the One X hopes to drop your jaw when you're propped in front of a 4K set, it's also promising graphical and performance perks for those not ready to upgrade beyond basic HD resolution.

Additionally, it appears that Xbox will finally enter the virtual world. Microsoft has partnered with a number of big brands, such as Lenovo, HP, Acer, Asus and Dell, to create Windows 10-compatible virtual-reality headsets. Coupled with its stunning graphics and performance, the One X could offer the best combination of content, quality and value when it's time to have your passport stamped in the virtual world.

## PS4 PRO PUTS PRETTY IN 4K TVS

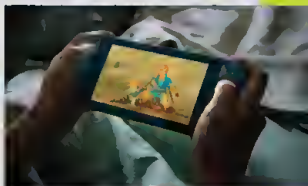
THE XBOX ONE X HITS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, but you can up your game immediately with the PlayStation 4 Pro. The system's guts aren't quite as powerful as the One X's published specs (see sidebar), but the console still produces some of the prettiest gaming this side of a monster PC rig.

The PS4 Pro is all about better performance and prettier graphics. Its target audience is players who've upgraded to a 4K, HDR-enabled television, but the hardware incorporates a number of tech tricks to

ensure its software also looks better and runs smoother on an HD set. Amazingly, the PS4 Pro can even make some of the medium's most graphically intensive games look better. *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* arrived months before the hardware upgrade, but a post-release patch allowed fans to ramp the game's visuals to PS4 Pro-like standards.

Similar technical wizardry upscales many titles played on the Pro to near-ultra HD quality. Only a handful of the console's titles currently run at native 4K, so this feature allows players to get the most out of their games until the floodgates open with more full-on 4K experiences.

PlayStation VR owners can also expect upgraded visuals and more fluid frame-rates when hooking their headsets up to a Pro. In fact, one needn't see more than the immersion-amping VR shooter *Farpoint* to appreciate the eye-popping presentation spawned by a PSVR/Pro combo. Pairing the two pieces of hardware is a cinch, making Sony's virtual reality offering a compelling choice for anyone who is skeptical about purchasing and setting up a pricier, more complex PC-based VR platform.



## NINTENDO SWITCHES IT UP

As anyone who's bowled a perfect game from behind a Wii-mote will attest, Nintendo's always favored innovation over raw power. Applying this same approach to their fan-pleasing Nintendo Switch console, Mario's handlers have certainly proven there's something to be said for forging your own path.

The wildly successful Switch is a home platform/portable hybrid that allows fans to "switch" from playing on the couch to their subway commute without missing a beat.

And if you've seen *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* in action, you're well aware this versatility

doesn't come at the cost of quality. Link's latest adventure isn't just his greatest yet, but also one of the year's best games on any console.

Whether playing *Zelda* with a Pro Controller in front of a 60-inch screen or clutching a Joy-Con, or competing with three friends in *Mario Kart* — on the same screen — in Switch's convenient table-top mode, there's no denying Nintendo has delivered big time. And with *Splatoon 2*, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Super Mario Odyssey* on the way, it looks as though our love affair with the platform is just beginning.



by Matt Cabral

# Star Wars Battle Front II

ELECTRONIC ARTS' AMBITIOUS SEQUEL OFFERS FANS A NEW HOPE

FEATURING CINEMA-RIVALING action, retina-searing visuals, and Force-fueled authenticity, 2015's *Star Wars Battlefront* immersed fans in a galaxy far, far away like few games before it. Still, its lack of a proper story-driven campaign left many players madder than a Wookiee.

*Star Wars Battlefront II* aims to rectify its predecessor's oversight by not only including a focused narrative path, but one that's considered new series canon. Taking place in the 30-year span between

*Return of the Jedi*'s conclusion and *The Force Awakens*' start, the interactive tale puts players in the boots of protagonist Iden Versio, a special forces soldier trained in land and space combat, espionage, sabotage, and infiltration.

While such skills could befit the Rebel Alliance's best of the best, Versio's actually fighting for the other side. Played by actress Janina Gavankar — best known for *True Blood* and *Sleepy Hollow* — the heroine leads the

Imperial's Inferno Squad on a mission to avenge the Emperor following the second Death Star's destruction. Versio and her squad of black armor-clad intimidators are called to action shortly after watching from the surface of Endor the explosive end of the moon-sized weapon. Fans have always viewed this moment as a victory, a time for Ewoks to dance and Jedi ghosts to look on approvingly. *Battlefront II*, however, offers a different — and darker — perspective.

This promising twist will no

doubt see players introducing Rebel scum to the business end of Versio's blaster, but they won't be the bad guy. According to Lucasfilm's Senior Director of Franchise Management Douglas Reilly, Versio is viewed as a hero. "She's not a villain at all; we position Iden as a hero, and we don't describe the Empire as bad guys, but simply as being on the other side of the conflict." More than simply putting players in the role of what they've always believed to be the enemy,





*Battlefront II* wants them to root for and even sympathize with the Empire.

Players will begin experiencing sympathy or empathy after they spend on Vardos, a new planet and home to our hero. Citizens of this Imperial utopia were raised to believe the Rebels are nothing more than terrorists determined to destroy the peace, structure and order they hold so dear. Like all soldiers on Vardos, Iden is looked up to and respected by the people. If

her heroism resonates with fans as *Battlefront II*'s creators intend, she won't be seen as an evil-doer, but as the series' next strong female role model. Of course, the collector in us is already hoping we find her action figure proudly hanging right beside Princess Leia's.

In terms of controller-clutching gameplay, this fresh perspective puts fans on the front lines of the battlefield, in the cockpit of TIE fighters, and in command of a companion droid. The latter — one of the game's cooler inclusions — looks like a miniature Imperial Probe Droid capable of frying foes and hacking security systems in a fashion that would make R2-D2 beep with envy. Couple these abilities with the fact that Versio's various weapons, gear and special ops skills can be customized and upgraded to fit particular play styles, and she makes other games' hardened space marines look like rookie recruits.

We can't wait to feel sorry for the Empire during *Battlefront II*'s dedicated story mode, but Versio's hero-making journey is just the appetizer to the title's multiplayer main course. Building on the first game's solid foundation, the sequel introduces enough new features and content to fill the Millennium Falcon's cargo hold. For starters, the online maelstrom will span all *Star Wars* eras, meaning characters,

weapons, gear, vehicles and locations from the original trilogy, prequel films and new movies will all be accounted for.

This scope also extends to the series' returning hero character system, which famously allows fans to temporarily tear through foes as some of the films' most iconic characters. Favorites such as Luke and Vader will certainly return, but the game's era-spanning scope will also see playable versions of Darth Maul, Rey and Kylo Ren join the fray. This game grants access to these legends differently than its predecessor, replacing the mostly luck-based system with a reward structure.

The reworked online mode also caters to specific styles, encouraging players to customize and upgrade characters along specific, defined career paths. This deeper approach allows them to pick from dedicated classes — much as they do in most online games — and become proficient within their discipline of choice. Weapon, gear and ability mods will further allow online combatants to customize their class-based characters and shape their experience on the battlefield.

Proper space combat, a feature that was lacking in the last game, allows players to spend more time dog-fighting among the stars. In addition to

## STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II PREQUEL PROVIDES PAGE-TURNING BACK STORY

A tie-in novel penned by author Christie Golden, who's written four previous *Star Wars* tomes, *Battlefront II: Inferno Squad* serves as a prequel



to the game. Unfolding during the *Rogue One* and *A New Hope* era, it focuses on the titular squadron of Imperial special ops soldiers who are called into action after the theft of the Death Star plans.

piloting the expected X-wing and TIE fighters, fans can also take a spin around the galaxy in iconic ships like Slave I and the Millennium Falcon. Much like the game's characters, its players benefit from an upgrade progression system that gives players some room to tinker with their hunks of junk.

Perhaps cooler than tooling around in Boba Fett's ship or attempting to break Han Solo's Kessel Run record is the ability to ride Tauntauns. That's right: Ramping into battle atop Hoth's heavy-breathing snow lizards is now a viable strategy. With fingers crossed, we hope to slice open the beasts' warm bellies and stuff downed teammates inside them for a quick health revive.

Additional *Battlefront II* details are locked down tighter than Luke Skywalker's location, but based on what's been revealed, it seems the sequel will have something for *Star Wars* fans of all stripes when it lands like a Wampa paw on Nov. 17.



# Far Cry 5

THE SANDBOX SERIES  
COMES STATESIDE TO TAKE  
ON A CRAZED CULT LEADER

by  
Matt Cabral

## FANS OF UBISOFT'S

*Far Cry* franchise have virtually visited a variety of exotic locales, from the first game's picturesque South Pacific island to the fourth entry's stunning Himalayan mountain range.

The first-person sandbox shooter's fifth installment continues this tradition, once again inviting players to a destination that wouldn't look out of place on a travel brochure. This time, however, the beauty is in our own backyard. Specifically, *Far Cry 5*'s over-the-top, open-world action unfolds in the fictional, modern-day frontier town of Hope County, Montana.

While there's no shortage of pretty sights to see in Big Sky Country, Creative Director Dan Hay explains that the decision to bring the series stateside had more to do with engaging storytelling than pretty scenery. "We wanted to build a believable situation where you are in the frontier, but that frontier is under stress and a very specific type of stress," Hay says.

That stress comes courtesy of Joseph Seed, a doomsday cult leader who's recruited the locals — whether they like it or not — to prepare for the country's impending collapse. Dubbed "The Father" by his family and faithful followers, Seed and his siblings control



the rural community via persuasion, fear and violence. As the leader of The Project at Eden's Gate movement, the extremist preacher has also stockpiled a massive arsenal and enlisted a personal backwoods brigade itchy to use it.

As a local sheriff's deputy, players are tasked with bringing Seed to justice before he brings the End of Days to America's Heartland. For the first time, fans can customize their character — choosing gender and skin color — before diving into the series' signature brand of dynamic sandbox mayhem. According to Hay, the ability to personalize your protagonist will make the experience more personal. "We want it to be you. We want it to be your voice that you have in your head while you're playing."

Hay wants to put players in *Far Cry* like never before, but he doesn't expect them to win this war all by themselves. A major part of the gameplay will involve recruiting characters and building a resistance to take Hope County back from Seed and his cultist following. Some of these brothers and sisters in arms will possess special skills you can leverage, such as the ability to outfit an old

seaplane with a Gatling gun.

On top of human allies, *Far Cry 5* features what Hay calls "fangs for hire" — loyal, four-legged companions that enjoy a nice scratch behind the ears ... when they're not tearing your enemies' throats out. Trainable pets, which will also include cougars and bears, can sniff out hidden foes, attack and even retrieve weapons. For gamers who would rather dismantle the cult alongside a flesh-and-blood friend, though, *Far Cry 5* supports full campaign online cooperative play.

While the franchise's latest chapter is brimming with fresh features, Hay promises that each players' path will feel like a signature *Far Cry* experience, what he calls "a strange, weird, wonderful adventure ... a story of survival in a beautiful place."

## BASICS

**DEVELOPER:**  
Ubisoft Montreal

**PUBLISHER:**  
Ubisoft

**PLATFORMS:**  
Xbox One, PS4, PC

**RELEASE:**  
02.27.2018



# Call of Duty WWII

by Matt Cabral

ACTIVISION'S FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER RETURNS FAN TO THE FOXHOLES OF WORLD WAR II

FOLLOWING YEARS OF games focused on modern, futuristic and even science fiction-flavored warfare, Activision's flagship first-person fragger finally returns to the front lines of the second world war. Aptly sub-titled *WWII*, the shooter revisits an era not depicted in a *Call of Duty* entry since 2008's *World at War*.

While developer Sledgehammer Games is taking the series back to its boots-on-the-ground roots, even revisiting iconic conflicts of the European theater, it's promising a fresh, redefined take on the familiar material.

Much like last year's *Battlefield 1*, *Call of Duty*'s next tour crafts an experience that wouldn't look—or sound—out of place in a classic theater. All the series' hallmarks—from its epic scale and cinematic action to set pieces that could make James Cameron blush—will be accounted for and cranked up to 11.

Trading the typical super-soldier story for a more relatable, personal tale, *WWII*'s campaign sees players assuming the role of private Ronald "Red" Daniels. The single-player path will include all the expected adrenaline-pumping action, but Sledgehammer's also striving to elevate the run-and-gun



experience with a renewed focus on historical accuracy, gritty authenticity, and the heroism of Daniels and his squad-mates.

In addition, players will interact with members of Daniels' U.S. 1st Infantry Division, as well as what the

developer is calling a "global and diverse cast" of Allied characters from the U.K. and French Resistance. On top of revisiting the D-Day Invasion of Normandy, fans will lock-and-load for other famed encounters, such as the liberation of Paris and the Battle of the Bulge.

Of course, players who prefer obscenely over-the-top action to textbook realism will want to stick with *WWII*'s Nazi Zombie mode. While deep-diving details are more scarce than supplies during the undead apocalypse, we know players will be slaughtering the brain-craving SS alongside friends. The dedicated cooperative mode will also feature a standalone story, entirely separate from the single-player campaign and multiplayer content.

Players can also interact with friends—away from the front lines—in a new social space dubbed "Headquarters," while dedicated Divisions,

such as Infantry and Amored, will put a fresh *WWII*-inspired spin on progressing their careers.

If you're among the first-person-shooter fans who have been disappointed in *Call of Duty*'s gradual transition from the foxholes of World War II to the far reaches of space, this entry should be just what the field medic ordered when it lands at Walmart Nov. 3.

## CALL OF DUTY SETS SIGHTS ON THE SILVER SCREEN

Not content with conquering game consoles every holiday season, *Call of Duty*'s also aiming to dominate the big screen with a film franchise modeled after Marvel's cinematic universe. According to Activision Blizzard Studios, *Call of Duty*-based films wouldn't be mindless action flicks or lame video-game adaptations, but character-driven stories supported by smart writing and skilled direction.

The studio, which claims to already have several years' of films plotted out, says the first installment could hit as early as next year. If all goes well at the box office, the series could also spawn a television show. Additional details are guarded tighter than spec-ops intel, but fans should probably plan on trading their gamepads for popcorn buckets before hitting the front lines.

### BASICS

**DEVELOPER:**  
Sledgehammer Games

**PUBLISHER:**  
Activision

**PLATFORMS:**  
Xbox One, PS4, PC

**RELEASE:**  
11.03.2017

by Matt Cabral

# Legend Of Zelda: Breath of the Wild

## FUN WAYS TO CONTINUE ADVENTURING AFTER CONQUERING THE CALAMITY

IF YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* since it launched in March, you may have already exterminated the evil-doing Ganon, rescued the princess and returned peace to the land of Hyrule.

Never fear! The following activities will keep you combating, questing and cooking long after Link's completed the main campaign.

### MEMORY LANE

Much of *Breath of the Wild*'s story is told via memories hidden throughout Hyrule. If you didn't discover all 13 of these narrative nuggets before drawing your sword on Ganon, they're well worth finding after you've faced him. In addition to putting more meat on the story — and bringing it to a more satisfying conclusion — these cinematic flashbacks are found in some secret-filled spots you might otherwise dismiss.

### SHRINE TIME

Many of *Breath of the Wild*'s best moments unfold within its hidden shrines. Unless you're a hardcore completionist though, you probably didn't conquer all 120 of these mysterious mini-dungeons before closing



the book on the game's story. Discovering some shrines, like the one buried on Eventide Island, can lead to some especially clever questing. Ganon might be toast, but there are still minlons to vanquish and puzzles to solve.

### SIDE QUESTING

Link's latest princess-rescuing ramp is absolutely brimming with optional activities, from running errands for quirky characters to constructing your very own Hylian village. While all the game's extracurricular activities are worth your time, tackling them before besting Ganon can be as daunting as

taking down your first Hinox. Thankfully, the game world remains open after the story's conclusion, allowing those with an unquenchable thirst for adventure to continue questing.

### HIDDEN CLASSICS

Outfitting Link with different armor, weapons and gear is a big aspect of *Breath of the Wild*, marking a significant departure for a franchise somewhat defined by its hero's signature green tunic, Master Sword and Hylian Shield. Purists can equip Link with these iconic classics, but they shouldn't expect to acquire them easily. If you haven't put in the legwork before the final fight, reuniting Link with his trademark gear makes for a fun and rewarding victory lap.

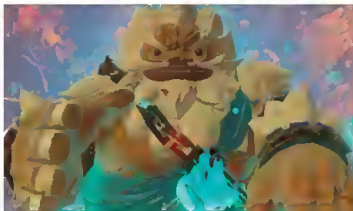
### STABLE MASTER

You probably tamed your fair share of wild horses on your

path to taking down Ganon, but you haven't truly seen Hyrule until you've done so atop a snorting boar or grumpy grizzly bear. Whether you're looking to train the land's most unwieldy wildlife or add the best steeds — such as the coveted Lord of the Mountain — to your stable, there's plenty of, er, horsing around to be had after you've completed the central quest.

### AMIIBO ADVENTURES

Those plastic Nintendo playthings you've been collecting might look pretty sweet displayed on your bookshelf, but they serve a much higher purpose in *Breath of the Wild*. All available amiibos unlock some sort of gear or loot within the game — so try them all — but certain figures yield especially cool rewards. Super Smash Bros. Link and Twilight Princess Wolf Link, for example, unlock the hero's loyal steed Epona and his howling alter-ego.



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\*Games sold separately. HDR functionality available with supported games and TVs. Xbox One Backward Compatibility feature works with select Xbox 360 games, see <http://www.xbox.com/backcompat>. Xbox Live and broadband internet required for initial download of game to console. Xbox Live Gold required for online multiplayer (sold separately). PC hardware requirements may vary for games on Windows 10. While supplies last. Game download codes inside. Download from Xbox Live; ISP fees apply. Significant storage required.

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 **Microsoft**



by Edward Gross

# The Superhero Geek

ANYONE WHO CHECKED OUT THE *SPIDER-MAN: Homecoming* feature in this issue would hardly be surprised that actor Tom Holland, who admits that he geeks out to many things, really gets his geek on when it comes to superheroes. And this is not because he also happens to play one.

"I am really a huge fan of superhero movies," he laughs. "And I'm obsessed with watching the trailers, and the promo art that comes out. And I love watching all the Easter eggs

that are hidden in the trailers. I'm actually a little bit obsessed with superhero movies, and that's something that predates my *Spider-Man* days by a good 15 years."

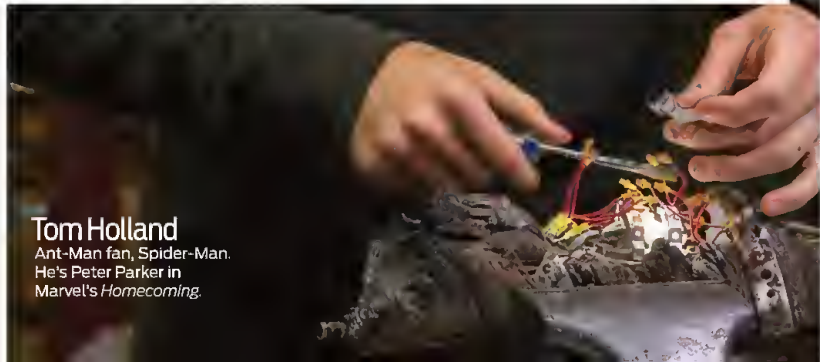
Which raises the question of his favorite pre-*Civil War* film in the genre. (It would be bad form to include that one, considering that he had a role in it.)

"I really liked *Ant-Man*," Holland declares without hesitation. "I thought *Ant-Man* was pretty cool, because it was different and new,

and a very unique version of what a superhero movie is. I also really liked *Spider-Man 2*, the Sam Raimi one."

His list of favorites goes on to include the original *Iron Man*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *The Avengers*. Noticeably, there aren't any DC movies on his list.

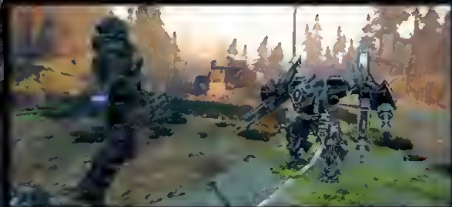
"Definitely a Marvel fan," he shrugs. "Don't get me wrong. I like the DC movies, but I'm not as huge a fan of them as I am of the Marvel movies."



**Tom Holland**  
Ant-Man fan, Spider-Man.  
He's Peter Parker in  
Marvel's *Homecoming*.

# ELEX

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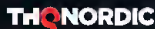


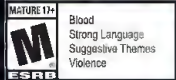
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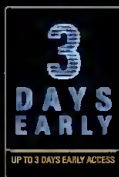


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